



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Department of Toxic Substances Control

PRESS RELEASE

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Maureen F. Gorsen, Director

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**Contact: Angela Blanchette
(510) 540-3732
ablanche@dtsc.ca.gov**

Lead in Jewelry Law to Expand March 1 *Law includes adult jewelry and body piercing jewelry*

SACRAMENTO -- Beginning March 1, a new state law expands to limit lead in adult jewelry and body piercing jewelry in California. The law, which has prohibited high lead levels in children's jewelry since September 2007, now will include all other jewelry that is manufactured, shipped, offered for sale, or sold for retail sale in the state.

"By expanding the new law, we're protecting the entire California population from toxic lead levels in jewelry," explained Maureen Gorsen, Director of Cal/EPA's Department Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). "Body piercings may be particularly vulnerable to poisoning since the lead enters the bloodstream through the pierced areas."

Lead is a toxic metal that can cause serious health effects ranging from behavioral problems and learning disabilities, to organ failure and even death -- particularly in children.

AB 1681 (Pavley) was enacted last year and applies to all jewelry retailers, distributors, suppliers, and manufacturers offering jewelry for sale in the state. The law applies to all stores, catalogs, vending machines and online sites.

Beginning March 1, 2008, the law places limitations on the materials used in adult and body piercing jewelry. For example, until August 30, 2009, base metals used in electroplated jewelry must contain less than 100,000 parts per million (ppm) lead (10%). After August 30, 2009, it reduces to 60,000 ppm lead (6%). Unplated metals used in adult jewelry must contain less than 15,000 ppm lead (1.5%). The law also establishes requirements for non-metallic adult jewelry components.

For body-piercing jewelry, the law now limits the materials that can be used for new piercings to materials that do not contain lead. Components not directly placed within the new piercing or mucous membrane must comply with the other jewelry requirements specified in the law.

In September 2007, the requirements for children's jewelry became effective by limiting lead to either 200 (.02%) or 600 (.06%) ppm, depending on the type of component used in the children's jewelry item.

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DTSC has notified thousands of jewelry retailers, body-piercing shops and other businesses affected by the new law. And is encouraging businesses to obtain certifications from suppliers that all jewelry and its components are in compliance with the law.

Failure to comply with the law may result in penalties up to \$2,500 per day for each violation.

“This law helps make jewelry safer for both children and adults,” Gorsen said. “The law sends a strong message, but we as consumers need to be even clearer -- we don’t want toxins in our products.”

Gorsen and DTSC staff are spearheading the state’s Green Chemistry Initiative, a multi-agency team that is exploring a different approach to environmental protection – transitioning away from managing toxic chemicals at the end of the lifecycle, to reducing or eliminating their use altogether.

For more information on the law visit: www.dtsc.ca.gov/LeadInJewelry.cfm.

Or, for information on the Green Chemistry Initiative visit:
<http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/PollutionPrevention/GreenChemistryInitiative/index.cfm>

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FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES: Contact the Department of Toxic Substances Control by phone at (800) 728-6942 or visit www.dtsc.ca.gov. To report illegal handling, discharge, or disposal of hazardous waste, call the Waste Alert Hotline at (800) 698-6942.

The mission of the Department of Toxic Substances Control is to provide the highest level of safety, and to protect public health and the environment from toxic harm.